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# ABOUT HIP DYSPLASIA

If you're a dog owner, you've probably heard the term by now: canine hip dysplasia. That's because hip dysplasia (HD) is the most common singular cause of hip arthritis in dogs, a condition that can make it difficult for your dog to jump up on the couch or even, in more serious cases, go for a quick walk.

## UNDERSTANDING HIP DYSPLASIA

A dog's hip joint is a standard ball and socket model. Your dog's femur head is the ball, and the socket is on his pelvis. In a healthy joint, the ball is snugly fit into the socket and articulates freely, allowing easy movement of the hips and legs. A ligament holds the two bones together, and they are encircled by something called the joint capsule, a connective tissue band. There is even more cartilage where the bones touch, which acts as a cushion between the articulating portions of bone.

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A DOG HAS HIP DYSPLASIA?

When a dog has HD, the hip joint is loosened. The issues surrounding HD, like a loss of muscle tension and connective tissue strength, happen because of this looseness, because the joint's parts no longer "fit" together.

## WHY DOES HIP DYSPLASIA HAPPEN?

There are a number of reasons for this abnormal joint function, and most dysplastic dogs are born with healthy, normal hips. Genetic factors do contribute, and HD is often seen in specific, larger breeds. But environmental factors can definitely exacerbate the issue. If the soft tissues around the joint don't develop normally, they may cause the bones to move apart, disrupting the snug fit that the joint needs to function normally. If the surfaces of the bones lose contact in what is called subluxation, the real signs and issues around HD may start to appear. However, some dogs might experience this same separation and never show symptoms. Others will be rendered arthritic and/or immobile. Hip Dysplasia affects every dog differently.

## WHAT CAN I DO TO PROTECT MY DOG?

You can control for certain risk factors of hip dysplasia, like obesity (throughout their lives) and extraneous activity on hard surfaces (when your dog is still a puppy.) Soft-ground exercise can help some puppies develop the joints without added stress. Whatever your dog's age or HD status, you can provide comfort with whole food, natural components that offer support for cartilage hydration and tissue integrity.